

Top 10 Tips for Working with Recruiters

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Top 10 Etiquette Tips for Working with Recruiters

One of the biggest questions I frequently receive is how best to work with recruiters. As part of a well-rounded career search strategy, working with recruiters can be extremely valuable. If you choose to work with a recruiter, or a recruiter seeks you out, follow these top etiquette tips to ensure that you have a smooth, positive, mutually rewarding relationship with your recruiter.

1. Be Responsive to Recruiter Inquiries

Speed is one of the most critical factors when working with a recruiting firm, especially contingency recruiters. If a recruiter is trying to reach you to discuss an opportunity, he or she will want to talk to you right away and will likely move on to someone else if you are hard to reach. You might consider getting a second phone line that you use only during your job search and an email that you use only for your job search. If you have a standard gmail address of firstnamelastname@gmail.com, you also can sign up for a Google Voice number, a free redirecting phone number that rings to an existing number of your choosing, such as your mobile phone.

2. Be Respectful of the Recruiter's Time

Remember too that recruiters are often working on numerous search assignments simultaneously. Many recruiting firms require a minimum number of successful placements each month for the recruiter to keep his or her job. Consequently, be mindful of the recruiter's time when you make contact.

3. Build a Relationship with a Recruiter.

As a general rule, you should always take a recruiter's call, even if you are not looking for a new position. A recruiter in your industry can provide valuable industry information and help you shape your own career path. Moreover, don't treat conversations with recruiters as transactions. You'd hate being treated that way, and so do recruiters.

4. Be Findable on LinkedIn

Recruiters and sourcers know how to find candidates, even the ones who are working in jobs they love. However, you can make their jobs easier by publishing a robust LinkedIn profile, joining relevant industry or function-related groups, building a strong LinkedIn network, and ensuring your profile is set to public viewing. LinkedIn also has a number of premium job seeker features that can help you be more visible. In 2015, LinkedIn rolled out a new feature that lets recruiters know you're open to inquiries. To turn this feature on, go to Jobs in the black bar at the top of the screen, then choose Preferences in the menu below.

5. Be a Valuable Networking Contact for the Recruiter

You can be a good source of information for the recruiter as well. Be a good contact for an industry/sector recruiter — keep your eyes and ears open for opportunities and candidates and share that information with the recruiter. If you are not a fit for an opportunity you are contacted about, but you can recommend someone else, share that information. A recruiter will remember that you provided a new contact for him or her when the opportunity was not exactly right for you and will think of you the next time.

6. Be Specific about Your Career Requirements

If you are looking for a position, be up front with the recruiter about the type of work, type of company, salary expectations, and so on that you need to have to explore opportunities further. The recruiter's goal is to fill open positions, so the more information you can provide about your non-negotiables and on what you are willing to compromise, the less likely you will be to frustrate a recruiter who has worked very hard on your behalf in positioning you to the wrong company.

7. Know that You Are Not the Right Candidate for Every Recruiter

Don't contact too many recruiters — especially at the same firm. Recruiters often have access to an internal candidate management system that allows them to see what contact you've had with other recruiters within the firm, and other positions you've applied for.

8. Be Up Front about Your Recruiter Relationships

Let your recruiter know when you are working with another recruiter. If two contingency recruiters submit you as a candidate to the same firm, you may not be considered by the client company at all, even if you are a perfect match. Companies don't want to mediate an argument between recruiters about who "owns" the candidate (and, consequently, who would receive the commission if the successful placement is made).

9. Recall How Recruiters Earn Their Fees

If you are working with a recruiter, don't apply for the same positions you are being submitted to as a candidate. You may end up inadvertently disqualifying yourself because the employer does not want to risk having a recruiter claim a commission if you are hired directly. If you see a position advertised and are contacted by a recruiter for the same opportunity, you can decide whether you want to apply directly or be submitted as a candidate by the recruiter. If you have a networking contact at the company, you may decide to apply directly or determine that a good recruiter can get you in front of a hiring manager more easily than you could get noticed yourself. (This is particularly true if the employer uses an applicant tracking system to screen resumes. Recruiters can often reach hiring managers directly.)

10. Be a Compelling Candidate

Last, but certainly not least, develop a compelling professional brand that appeals to hiring executives—and thus to recruiters. Demonstrate in your executive resume and your LinkedIn profile that you are rarely and uniquely suited for hard-to-fill roles to ensure that recruiters find you for the unusual skill set you bring to the employment marketplace. While you will not automatically fall off recruiters' radar for being fabulously average, you are more likely to capture a busy recruiter's attention if you can demonstrate the scarce skills and assets that a hiring executive is demanding.

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